

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1 (original): A method of conducting a game, comprising:

providing, in association with a primary game, a bonus game comprising a simulated contest against an opponent;

providing said player an opportunity to play one of said primary game or said bonus game;

a1 in association with play of said bonus game, providing said player an opportunity to select a bonus game character to represent said player in said simulated contest against said opponent; and

randomly determining an outcome of at least one of said primary game and said bonus game.

2 (original): The method according to claim 1, further comprising selecting said bonus game character from a library of available bonus game characters.

3 (original): The method according to claim 1, further comprising enabling said player to at least modify some aspects of said bonus game character by selecting bonus game character elements from a library of available bonus game character elements.

4 (original): The method according to claim 1, further comprising enabling said player to select a previously created bonus game character selected in a previous bonus game.

5-7 (canceled).

8 (currently amended): The method according to claim 7 1, wherein said opportunity to play said bonus game is enabled only upon the occurrence of certain bonus trigger events

associated with play of said primary game, said certain bonus game trigger events ~~include~~ including at least some of a randomly timed bonus event trigger, a specified outcome form play of said primary game, a challenge from another player already ~~participating~~ qualified to participate in said bonus game, and use of a predetermined number of credits to buy play in said bonus game.

a1 9 (canceled).

10 (original): The method according to claim 1, further comprising implementing said opponent as another bonus game character.

11 (original): The method according to claim 10, further comprising implementing said simulated contest as a simulation of combat.

12 (currently amended): The method according to claim ~~10~~ 11, wherein said simulated contest comprises a visual representation on a display of said simulation of combat.

13 (original): The method according to claim 11, wherein said simulated contest includes a substantially continuous display of competition to provide a visual perception of being ongoing.

14 (original): The method according to claim 11, further comprising structuring said bonus game characters and said simulation of combat from a selection of modular components.

15 (original): A method of conducting a game, comprising:
providing, in association with a primary game, a bonus game comprising a simulated contest between two characters;

providing at least two game characters for play of said bonus game, at least one game character being an offensive character in said bonus game and at least another game character being a defensive character in said bonus game;

providing a player an opportunity to play one of said primary game or said bonus game;

a1 in association with play of said bonus game, providing said player an opportunity to select a bonus game character;

randomly determining an outcome of at least one of said primary game and said bonus game.

16 (original): The method according to claim 15, further comprising selecting said offensive character and said defensive character from a library.

17 (original): The method according to claim 15, further comprising enabling said player to at least modify a bonus game character by selection of character elements from a library of available bonus game character elements.

18 (original): The method according to claim 15, further comprising enabling said player to select a previously created bonus game character used in a previous bonus game.

19 (original): The method according to claim 15, said primary game requires placement of a wager as a precondition for play thereof.

20 (original): The method according to claim 19, wherein said primary game includes one of reel-type slot machine games, card games, keno games, lotto games, and bingo games.

21 (original): The method according to claim 15, wherein said player is provided an opportunity to play said bonus game only upon the occurrence of at least one bonus game trigger event.

a1 22 (currently amended): The method according to claim 21, wherein said at least one bonus game trigger event includes at least one of a randomly timed bonus trigger event, a specified outcome in said primary game, a challenge from another player already participating qualified to participate in said bonus game, and use of a specified number of credits to buy into said bonus game.

23 (original): The method according to claim 15, further comprising randomly determining said outcome using a random number generator.

24 (original): The method according to claim 15, wherein said simulated contest comprises a contest between one offensive character and one defensive character.

25 (original): The method according to claim 24, wherein said simulated contest further comprises a display of physical competition between said one offensive character and said one defensive character.

26 (original): The method according to claim 24, wherein said simulated contest comprises a display of combat between said one offensive character and said one defensive character.

27 (original): The method according to claim 25, wherein said competition is displayed as a substantially ongoing competition.

28 (original): The method according to claim 25, further comprising structuring said bonus game characters and said competition from a selection of modular components.

29 (original): A method of conducting a game, comprising:

providing a plurality of gaming machines, each gaming machine of said plurality of gaming machines configured for play of a primary game and to enable play of a bonus game;

a1 providing, in association with play of said bonus game, at least one display for exhibiting at least one competition between at least two different characters, each of said at least two different characters being associated with a gaming machine of said plurality of gaming machines;

exhibiting a simulation of said at least one competition between said at least two different characters on said at least one display to an outcome; and

determining at least one award associated with said outcome of said at least one competition.

30 (original): The method according to claim 29, wherein said at least one competition comprises a plurality of competitions.

31 (original): The method according to claim 30, further comprising associating an award value with each competition of said plurality of competitions.

32 (original): The method according to claim 31, further comprising associating differing award values with at least two competitions of said plurality of competitions.

33 (original): The method according to claim 29, wherein exhibiting said at least one competition comprises simulating a physical contest between said at least two characters and randomly determining said outcome.

34 (original): The method according to claim 33, determining said at least one award according to said outcome of said contest.

35 (original): The method according to claim 29, wherein said primary game includes one of reel-type slot machine games, card games, keno games, lotto games, and bingo games.

a1 36 (original): The method according to claim 29, further comprising providing a player playing at a gaming machine of said plurality of gaming machines an opportunity for selecting one of said at least two different characters.

37-42 (canceled).

43 (new). A system for playing a game of chance, comprising:

a plurality of networked gaming machines, each gaming machine of said plurality of gaming machines being adapted for playing of a primary game and a bonus game and being adapted to randomly determine an outcome in play of said primary game, said bonus game comprising a simulated contest against at least one opponent; and

at least one bonus game input device engageable by a player to

select a bonus game character to represent said player in said simulated contest against at least one opponent, and

modify one or more aspects of said bonus game character by selecting bonus game character elements from a library of available bonus game character elements.

44 (new). The system of claim 43, further comprising said at least one input device of each of said plurality of gaming machines being engageable by a player to select a team on which said bonus game character participates in the simulated contest.

45 (new). The system of claim 43, wherein selected bonus game characters of at least two of said plurality of networked gaming machines define a first team of bonus game characters and selected bonus game characters of at least two other of said plurality of networked gaming machines define a second team of bonus game characters, said first team of bonus game characters competing against said second team of bonus game characters in the simulated contest.

a1 46 (new). The system of claim 45, wherein said plurality of networked gaming machines includes at least two banks of gaming machines, each bank of gaming machines including at least two gaming machines, and wherein said first team is defined by selected bonus game characters of said at least two of the plurality of networked gaming machines included in one of the banks of gaming machines, and said second team is defined by selected bonus game characters of said at least two of the plurality of networked gaming machines included in another of the at least two banks of gaming machines.

47 (new). The system of claim 45, wherein said plurality of networked gaming machines includes gaming machines at at least two gaming locations, each of said gaming locations including at least two gaming machines, and wherein said first team is defined by selected bonus game characters of said at least two of the plurality of networked gaming machines included at one of the gaming locations and said second team is defined by selected bonus game characters of said at least two of the plurality of networked gaming machines included at another of the gaming locations.

48 (new). The system of claim 45, wherein each of said teams has an associated progressive jackpot, wherein a portion of winnings realized upon one of said selected bonus game characters of a first of said teams defeating one of said selected bonus game characters of a second of said teams in the simulated contest are credited to a progressive jackpot corresponding to the plurality of gaming machines having selected characters defining said first team.

49 (new). The system of claim 43, wherein playing of said bonus game at one of said plurality of networked gaming machines is initiated only upon the occurrence of at least one bonus game trigger event, said at least one bonus game trigger event including at least one of a randomly timed bonus trigger event, a specified outcome in said primary game, a challenge from another player already qualified to participate in said bonus game, and use of a specified number of credits to buy into said bonus game.

a1 50 (new). The system of claim 49, wherein each of said plurality of gaming machines further includes a bonus game initiation input, and when said bonus game trigger event is a challenge from another player already participating in said bonus game, said bonus game initiation input is engageable by a challenged player to perform one of accepting the challenge, whereupon said bonus game is initiated, and rejecting said challenge, whereupon a quantity of credits are debited from the challenged player and credited to the other player already participating in the bonus game.

51 (new). The system of claim 43, wherein upon selection by both a player and an opponent of said bonus game character and of said one or more bonus game character elements, an outcome of the simulated contest is randomly determined.

52 (new). The system of claim 43, wherein each of said bonus game character elements available for selection provides a player's selected character with different competitive advantages as compared to other of said bonus game character elements, whereby a player's selection of one or more of the bonus game character elements allows the player to improve the player's probability of winning the simulated contest.
